

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1626

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 7150

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, PINS, LE

SUBJECT: CALL ON RAYMOND EDDE

REF: BEIRUT 5857

1. SUMMARY. SURING TWO-HOUR CONVERSATION ON AUG 27, RAYMOND EDDE CLAIMED SYRIA INTENDS TO ANNEX PART OF LEBANON, CRITICIZED IDEA OF A MARONITE STATE, EXPRESSED HIS FEAR THAT LEBANON WILL BE PARTITIONED, AND INDICATED THAT HE WAS NOT OPTIMISTIC THAT ARAB LEAGUE'S PEACE-KEEPING EFFORT WOULD SUCCEED. END SUMMARY.

2. CHARGE, ACCOMPANIED BY EMBOFF LANE, CALLED ON RAYMOND EDDE, UNSUCCESSFUL CANDIDATE FOR LEBANESE PRESIDENCY, ON AUG 27. CHARGE OPENED DISCUSSION, AS HE HAD WITH JUNBLATT, BY EXPLAINING THAT HE WAS MAKING SERIES OF CALLS AS FOLLOW-UP TO AMB SEELYE'S MISSION, AND THAT HE APPRECIATED
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OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN EDDE'S VIEWS ON CURRENT SITUATION IN LEBANON.

3. SYRIAN INTERVENTION. EDDE RESPONDED WITH LONG, DETAILED ATTACK ON SYRIAN INTERVENTION IN LEBANON. SYRIA HAD NEVER ACCEPTED FRENCH ACTION IN 1919 DETACHING BEKAA, AKKAR AND TRIPOLI FROM SYRIA AND INCLUDING THEM IN GREATER LEBANON; THIS WAS WHY THEY HAD NEVER EXCHANGED AMBASSADORS WITH LEBANON. SYRIAN INTERVENTION IN LEBANON WAS ILLEGAL; IT MAY HAVE BEEN CONNIVED AT BY FRANGIE, BUT HE HAD NEVER OFFICIALLY INVITED THEM IN. IF HE HAD, SYRIAN PRESENCE MIGHT BE FIFTY PER CENT LEGAL; UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES IT WAS COMPLETE ILLEGAL. SYRIANS WERE ALREADY DEMONSTRATING THEIR TRUE INTENTIONS AND ACTING AS THOUGH THEY WERE SOVEREIGN IN SOME AREAS. THEY WERE PREVENTING BEKAA FARMERS FROM MARKETING THEIR WHEAT IN MT. LEBANON AND CONDUCTING TRIALS IN THE BEKAA. THEY HAD PREVENTED CHRISTIAN ARMY FROM MOVING TOO CLOSE TO TRIPOLI BECAUSE THEY INTENDED TO TAKE IT AND KEEP IT. IF THEIR TRUE PURPOSE WERE TO ESTABLISH PEACE BETWEEN CHRISTIAN AND MOSLEM FORCES, WHY WERE THEY IN HERMEL, WHICH WAS COMPLETELY MOSLEM AND OUTSIDE THE FIGHTING AREA? SYRIA HAD ALSO INTERVENED TO CRUSH THE PLO SO THAT IT WOULD NO LONGER BE AN INDEPENDENT ACTOR ON MIDDLE EAST STAGE AND A POTENTIAL THREAT TO SYRIAN FREEDOM OF ACTION.

4. THE MARONITE STATE. EDDE SAID THAT AFTER INCIDENT AT AIN EL-RUMANNEH IN 1975 WHICH HAD SPARKED THE WAR, HE TWICE DISCUSSED CHRISTIAN PLANS WITH GEMAYEL, FRANGIE AND CHAMOUN. HE HAD ASKED TWO QUESTIONS--WHO WILL YOU GET TO HELP YOU AND HOW CAN YOU DRIVE THE PALESTINIANS OUT OF LEBANON WHEN THEY ARE HERE LEGALLY? ON FIRST POINT, EDDE SAID HE KNEW THAT AFTER VIET-NAM, USG WOULD NOT INVOLVE ITSELF MILITARILY IN LEBANON, AND "SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP" BETWEEN MARONITES AND FRANCE WAS A THING OF THE PAST. EDDE IMPLIED THAT HE KNEW CHRISTIANS COULD NOT WIN WITHOUT OUTSIDE SUPPORT, AND HE DID NOT WANT TO BE ON LOSING SIDE. AFTER 18 MONTHS OF FIGHTING, HE ASKED RHETORICALLY, WHAT HAVE THE CHRISTIANS ACCOMPLISHED? THEY HOLD NO MORE TERRITORY THAN THEY DID 18 MONTHS AGO EXCEPT KARANTINA AND TELL ZAATAR. WERE THEY WORTH THE BLOODSHED AND DESTRUCTION THAT HAD OCCURRED? THE MASSACRE AT TELL

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ZAATAR HAD DESTROYED CHRISTIAN LEBANESE IMAGE NOT ONLY IN MOSLEM ARAB WORLD BUT IN FRANCE AND U.S. AS WELL. IT MIGHT SOON BE AS DANGEROUS FOR A CHRISTIAN LEBANESE TO LIVE IN KUWAIT OR SAUDI ARABIA AS FOR AN ISRAELI.

5. ON SECOND POINT, LEBANESE PARLIAMENT HAD APPROVED CAIRO ACCORDS IN 1969, THUS GIVING PALESTINIANS LEGAL RIGHT TO BE IN LEBANON. EDDE SAID HE HIMSELF HAD VOTED

AGAINST IT AT THAT TIME, BELIEVING THAT LEBANON SHOULD RETAIN LEGAL RIGHT TO EXPEL PALESTINIANS IF AND WHEN IT COULD; HOWEVER, GEMAYEL, FRANGIE AND CHAMOUN HAD VOTED FOR. TO TRY TO EXPEL PALESTINAINS NOW IS NOT ONLY ILLEGAL, IT IS IMPRACTICAL; NO OTHER COUNTRY WILL ACCEPT THEM.

6. EDDE THEN DISCUSSED HOW IMPRACTICAL PROPOSED MARONITE STATE WOULD BE. USING FIGURES HE HAD PREPARED, HE SAID MARONITES COMPRISE ONLY 23 PER CENT OF PRESENT POPULATION OF LEBANON, AND THEIR "HOMELAND" CONSTITUTES ONLY ABOUT 25 PERCENT OF LEBANON'S TOTAL AREA. MORE THAN HALF OF LEBANON'S CHRISTIANS LIVE OUTSIDE THIS AREA. THESE PEOPLE DO NOT WANT PARTITION, BUT THEY HAVE NO ONE TO SPEAK FOR THEM EXCEPT EDDE. HE SAID MARONITE STATE WOULD NOT BE ECONOMICALLY VIABLE AND WOULD HAVE TO RELY ON MILLIONS OF DOLLARS A YEAR IN OUTSIDE HELP, "LIKE ISRAEL."

7. PARTITION. SPEAKING OF PARTITION, EDDE SAID THAT HE OPPOSED IT, BUT HE VERY MUCH FEARED IT WOULD COME ABOUT BECAUSE IT OFFERED SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE. SYRIA WOULD REGAIN ITS "LOST" TERRITORIES AND HAFIZ AL ASSAD COULD SAY TO HIS PEOPLE, "LOOK WHAT I, AN ALAWITE, HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH THAT YOUR SUNNI PRIME MINISTER WERE UNABLE TO ACCOMPLISH FOR 60 YEARS." ISRAEL WOULD ANNEX LEBANON SOUTH OF THE LITANI, AN AREA THEY HAVE LONG COVETED, CLAIMING THAT IN VIEW OF SYRIAN EXPANSION THEY NEEDED A NEW "SAFE" FRONTIER. (EDDE CLAIMED TO HAVE IN HIS POSSESSION A LETTER FROM CHAIM WEIZMAN TO LLOYD GEORGE CLAIMING THE LITANI AS THE NATURAL NORTHERN BOUNDARY OF THE JEWISH HOMELAND.) THE CHRISTIAN LEADERS WOULD HAVE THE MARONITE STATE THEY THINK THEY WANT; PALESTINIANS WOULD HAVE A SAFE HAVEN IN SOUTH LEBANON, WHERE THEY WOULD SLOWLY REPLACE THE REMAINING CHRISTIANS, WHO WOULD MOVE TO CONFIDENTIAL

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NEW MARONITE STATE; AND DAMAL JUNBLATT, IN ALLIANCE WITH PALESTINIANS, WOULD FINALLY HAVE A COUNTRY THAT HE COULD RULE. IF PARTITION WERE FORMALIZED, EDDE SAID, HE FEARED THAT SOUTH LEBANESE STATE WOULD BECOME INCREASINGLY RED. USSR MIGHT OFFER ASSISTANCE, WHICH WOULD BE ACCEPTED, IN EXCHANGE PERHAPS FOR A NAVAL BASE AT SIDON.

8. ARAB LEAGUE EFFORTS. EDDE SAID HE SUPPORTED ARAB LEAGUE PEACE-MAKING EFFORT OF DR. KHOLI, BUT HE FEARED THEY WOULD NOT SUCCEED. DR. KHOLI HAD ONLY 3,000 TROOPS AT HIS DISPOSAL, AND HE TOLD EDDE HE NEEDS AT LEAST 12,000. WHEN ASKED WHY ARAB COUNTRIES HAD NOT SUPPLIED MORE TROOPS, EDDE SAID THERE WERE TWO REASONS. FIRST, MODERATE ARAB COUNTRIES (EGYPT, SAUDI ARABIA, KUWAIT) WERE FED UP WITH PALESTINIAN PROBLEM. ALTHOUGH THEY WOULD NOT SAY SO

PUBLICLY, THEY WERE DELIGHTED TO SEE PLO TAKE A BATTERING AND WOULD BE GLAD TO SEE IT DESTROYED. IF THIS COULD BE DONE BY CHRISTIANS RATHER THAN MOSLEMS, SO MUCH THE BETTER. SECOND, OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES HAD ALWAYS BEEN JEALOUS OF LEBANON--ITS DEMOCRACY, WEALTH AND FREEDOM. THEY WOULD SHED NO TEARS IF LEBANESE DESTROYED EACH OTHER.

9. PRESIDENT SARKIS. EDDE SAID PRESIDENT-ELECT SARKIS FACES A DIFFICULT TASK. UNLESS HE CAN GET ASSURANCES FROM SYRIANS THAT THEY WILL WITHDREAW WHEN HE ASKS THEM TO, HE CANNOT IN GOOD CONCIENCE GO BEFORE PARLIAMENT ON SEPT 23 AND SWEAR THE CONSTITUTIONAL OATH TO PRESERVE "THE INDEPENDENCE OF LEBANON AND ITS TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY." EDDE SAID THAT HE PERSONALLY WOULD NOT ATTEND THE SWEARING-IN PARLIAMENTARY SESSION UNLESS HE KNEW SARKIS HAS RECEIVED SUCH ASSURANCES--TO DO SO WOULD BE TO ACQUIESCE IN THE ILLEGAL SYRIAN OCCUPATION. HE KNEW OTHER DEPUTIESS FELT THE SAME WAY. HE WOULD REGRET ABSENTING HIMSELF FROM THIS SESSION, BECAUSE EVERYONE WOULD BELIEVE THAT HE HAD STAYED AWAY BECAUSE HE LOST THE ELECTION, BUT IT WAS A MATTER OF PRINCIPLE.

10. COMMENT. AS AMB SEELYE REPORTED (REFTEL), EDDE IS A GREAT TALKER AND HE REPEATED IN THIS DISCUSSION MANY OF HIS EARLIER OBSERVATIONS. GIVEN HIS DIRE PREDICTIONS AND PESSIMISTIC OUTLOOK, EDDE WAS REMARKABLY CHEERFUL DURING OUT TWO-HOUR CONVERSATION. PERHAPS HE IS NOT UNHAPPY THAT
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HE LOST THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION AND DOES NOT HAVE TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY ON SEPT 23 FOR TRYING TO FIND A WAY OUT OF "THE MESS THAT IS LEBANON." IN PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES IN LEBANON, IT IS CERTAINLY EASIER TO BE IN EDDE'S POSITION THAN THAT OF SARKIS.
HUNT

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